Speech from the Throne 2009
Delivered at the Opening of
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General Assembly of the
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador
on Wednesday, March 25, 2009
by His Honour
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Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador

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Tragedy at Sea top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and our friends around the world, are embracing the families and dear friends of the sixteen men and the woman who perished in the terrible crash at sea of the helicopter that was carrying workers to our offshore oil fields. Taken from us too suddenly and too soon, these seventeen fine individuals leave behind brokenhearted children, grieving partners and parents, best friends, closely-knit communities and a province that will be forever marked by their loss. Amid the heartbreak, our spirits were lifted as we learned that one young man, a gifted mariner named Robert Decker, was pulled to safety from the frigid waters and returned to the warm embrace of his loved ones. But as our hopes for the others fell with the gathering darkness, so did our tears. How many times have we as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians cast our grief-stricken gaze across the ocean that has claimed those we dearly love? How many fishermen and other mariners across the centuries have lost their lives in these waters while providing for those they love? The Ocean Ranger tragedy 27 years ago and so many other tragedies remain fresh in our memories and remind us of the perils our people face to provide for their families. In the weeks ahead, we will cooperate with those who are working to determine how this happened and how to make these noble occupations safer.

Honouring Captain Bob Bartlett top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: It is timely this year that we are honouring a mariner who endured many tragedies of his own but persevered despite them all. Captain Bob Bartlett of Brigus, one of Newfoundland and Labrador's finest mariners, shared a series of expeditions to the Arctic with polar explorer Robert E. Peary and learned to navigate a vessel along the ice pack ever closer to the North Pole. In the historic expedition a century ago, he reached a latitude farther north than anyone had ever navigated before, and close enough that Peary and his Inuit companions were able to complete the trip to the Pole by sledge. The feat earned Bartlett the rare Hubbard Medal of the National Geographic Society, reserved for history's most elite explorers. Five years later, commanding one of his many scientific missions to the Arctic, Bartlett endured the loss of his vessel, the *Karluk*, in the polar ice. Heroically, Bartlett and an Inuit companion, Kataktovik, trekked across the ice to Siberia, journeying 700 miles south to reach a port where Bartlett secured a ship and set in motion an operation to rescue the remaining survivors. Such is the calibre of the people Newfoundland and Labrador has long produced. We ought to hold Bob Bartlett up before our children as a reflection of their own innermost potential to face great challenges boldly and brilliantly.

Staying the Course top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: We as a province were called upon to face great challenges boldly and brilliantly in 2003 when an unsustainable fiscal situation held us in its ever-tightening grip. Determined to navigate a course from this crisis to calmer waters, My Government in its first term set in motion a plan to get the province's fiscal situation under control while at the same time beginning to grow our economy more effectively in ways that would generate lasting employment, open up new opportunities for diversification and lead us progressively to self-reliance. My First Minister fought for and achieved significant new benefits from offshore oil development, and the province under My Government's leadership has for the first time taken important equity stakes in new offshore projects. Last fall, we received news that proved the course My Government has taken is the right one. For the first time since Confederation, Newfoundland and Labrador has achieved **"have" status**. We will not qualify for equalization payments in the coming year and in years to come. This unprecedented achievement is the culmination of everything My Government and our people have been doing since 2003 to master our own destiny. For Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, this is a moment to take pride, not merely in what we have done, but more importantly in who we are. We are determined to stand strong as leaders in this federation, proud of our achievements and confident in our future. Let the naysayers be warned: we will not be stopped short of success.

Events far beyond our shores have brought about a global economic storm the like of which the world has not seen for many decades. While world leaders worry about the right course to take, we in this province have already demonstrated the right approach that leads from decline to growth. We have charted **a course for others to follow**. World leaders can take it from this province that optimizing the value of public spending is a strategy that works. Reducing our public debt over time to raise our credit rating and lower our interest rates is a strategy that works. Investing in infrastructure to lay the foundation for future investment is a strategy that works. Cutting taxes for employers and consumers and funding pension plans is a strategy that works. Investing in personal self-reliance by combating poverty is a strategy that works. Investing in people by improving access to quality education is a strategy that works. Standing strong on principle and securing agreements that truly benefit the people of our province is a strategy that works. These things My Government has done, and because they were done early and done well, our province is better positioned than most to weather the storm and emerge from it stronger.

Expecting Better from Ottawa top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: In times of economic turmoil, Canadians expect their Federal Government to govern with integrity and chart a responsible course forward to better times for not just some, but all Canadians. Buried in the 2009 federal budget is a **deep cut in funding** to one province and one alone: ours. The cut will cost us more than a billion dollars the province ought to be receiving from offshore revenues from an agreement negotiated by a Progressive Conservative Government a quarter century ago. Only a year after changing the equalization program to give it stability, they have changed it again to punish Newfoundland and Labrador. At a time when the people of our province are celebrating our status as net fiscal contributors to the federation, it is truly appalling that the current Government of this federation has chosen to betray us and oppress us with policies devised to drive us back into decline just because we have exercised our democratic rights - to vote as we wish.

Captaining Our Own Ship top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Canada and its provinces and territories have built a proud reputation over the years for international cooperation, participation and partnership. In science and technology, humanitarianism and peacekeeping, environmental stewardship and trade, Canada and its provinces and territories have long been leaders. As we move forward to forge new and stronger relationships for the century to come, it is essential that the concerns and aspirations of all members of the federation be taken into account. Unfortunately, Newfoundland and Labrador is not convinced that the current Federal administration, having ignored our best interests when developing domestic policy, will do any better in **representing our best interests** when developing foreign policy.

If the current Federal Government is not prepared to represent the best interests of provinces like ours, then we as a province will protect our best interests ourselves. To lower tariff barriers to our exports while safeguarding our fish stocks and securing markets for our seal products, we will speak up on our own behalf **on the international stage** and work to effect progressive agreements that take our best interests fully into account.

My Government will allow nothing to prevent us from charting a clear course to the high latitudes of self-reliance. At Long Harbour, we achieved a new and stronger agreement with Vale Inco on the scale and pace of processing, and work is moving full steam ahead. In the offshore sector, we achieved new equity stakes in Hebron and White Rose, and work is moving full steam ahead. Planning to develop our Lower Churchill green energy resource is moving full steam ahead. In no other region of the western world is **optimism** greater than it is right here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and this optimism fuels our confidence that we can meet any challenge.

Weathering Every Storm top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: With our confidence secure, we are not swayed off course when storms arise. In Grand Falls-Windsor and the central region, the historic pulp and paper mill and its associated operations have been shut down after over a century of operation that has prospered the operators greatly. This is a major blow, but nothing will weaken our resolve to

weather this storm and come out the other side stronger.

My First Minister stated clearly in December that we cannot as a Government allow a company that no longer operates in this province to maintain ownership of our resources. We will not give away our timber and water resources to a company that does not continue to honour its historic commitments on industrial development related to our timber resources. My Government therefore in December introduced legislation to return these natural resources to their rightful owners, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

My Government will not abandon those whose labour has prospered our province so greatly. My Government is committed to working in partnership with all affected communities, with our sights clearly focused on new opportunities for long-term stability and prosperity. Solutions take time, but our track record in Stephenville demonstrates that our approach works.

With many who once found employment in other provinces now returning home, My Government recognizes that families in many regions need help now to weather the storm. Just weeks ago, it was quick off the mark in announcing a record provincial investment in infrastructure projects that will create jobs in every region. Through highways and bridges, ferries and wharves, hospitals and schools, care homes and campuses, public buildings and public parks, we are making unprecedented investments in infrastructure projects that will get people working and money flowing. This year's infrastructure program is the largest in our province's history, with levels of spending fifty percent higher than what was spent last year. By committing about $800 million this year and more than $4 billion over the next several years for health care, education, housing, justice, municipal and transportation infrastructure, My Government is leading the charge and reassuring Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by its actions that we will not retreat from our forward march to self-reliance.

Learning from Health Care Mistakes and Moving Forward top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: No area of public responsibility is more essential to our people or more important to My Government than health care. My Government greatly appreciates the efforts of Judge Margaret Cameron and her team to get to the bottom of the failures of hormone receptor testing for patients with **breast cancer**. My Government, and surely the previous Governments, are profoundly sorry that those failures happened in the first place; but happen they did, and we have learned from those mistakes and are prepared to move forward in light of the recommendations that we have been given. These recommendations complement the findings of the Task Force on Adverse Health Events that My Government also commissioned. My Government is committed to raising to a much higher standard the quality of the laboratory work that is central to effective diagnosis and treatment of our province's patients. Shortcomings and failures in diagnosis and treatment have been identified nationwide, so with these recommendations before us, we now have the opportunity to lead the country in setting higher standards. My Government is sincerely grateful to the patients, the families and the health care workers who participated in the Cameron inquiry and assures them that their legacy will be a health care system in this province that is stronger than it has ever been before.

Judge Cameron's report encourages us to be vigilant in all areas of health care. Her message is not lost on My Government, which will be looking at the bigger picture of health care delivery to identify other areas where improvements are needed. My Government welcomes the new chief executive officer of Eastern Health, Vickie Kaminski, and looks forward to working closely with her, and with others throughout the health care system, to implement Judge Cameron's recommendations and to improve the delivery of health care in our province. My Government is particularly cognizant of the need to ensure we retain and recruit the health care professionals we require. Our health care system cannot function without **doctors, nurses and other professionals**. My Government is ready to do more, within our means, to make Newfoundland and Labrador even more attractive to health care professionals.

My Government is also continuing to implement the recommendations of the Turner inquiry report, from which important lessons were learned. In addition this year, My Government will create a new Department with responsibility for **Child, Youth and Family Services**. These services are currently within a Division of the Department of Health and Community Services. This move will be made in recognition of the priority My Government gives to Child, Youth and Family Services and to

strengthen and enhance the profile of these services.

Preparing Our People for Self-reliance top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: The vulnerability of children to the consequences of poverty is one of the key reasons My Government has made poverty reduction a top priority. Local and national anti-poverty groups continue to champion My Government's **Poverty Reduction** Strategy as a model for the country. My Ministers thank the many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and groups whose feedback will shape the next phase of our strategy and help us build a society in which all citizens, regardless of the conditions they are from or the challenges they face, can participate fully in the many social and economic benefits of our growing self-reliance.

Through major investments in **education**, we will continue to prepare our people to make the most of every opportunity that awaits them. This year, My Government will turn its attention to developing a strategic plan for early childhood learning, to give our children the kind of advantage that is enjoyed by kids in the world's most progressive jurisdictions. My Government has already made huge investments in educational excellence, raising annual education funding beyond a billion dollars for the first time in our history. At the K-12 level, My Government has progressively capped class sizes, introduced new programs, provided free textbooks, expanded labs and learning resources, and given students in remote areas access to programs never before available in their communities.

At the **post-secondary** level, My Government has frozen tuition fees at national lows throughout its mandate and led the country in student aid reform while maintaining funding for facilities and programs. Every action is grounded in the conviction that our success tomorrow depends on the investments we make in education today. That student focus will continue this year. In recognition of his many years of service to Memorial University, My Government sincerely thanks Dr. Eddy Campbell, Memorial's acting President and Vice-Chancellor, and we wish him well in his new position. My Government looks forward to the recruitment of a new President for Memorial University, and My Government will continue to respect the autonomy of Memorial University. With the White Paper on Public Post-secondary Education and the Skills Task Force report to guide us, Newfoundland and Labrador is ready to seize the opportunities of the new economy.

Our province will need more workers as it continues to grow. Our progress depends on our ability to retain the skilled workers we educate and recruit the skilled workers we require. Last year, we set to work on a **Youth Retention and Attraction** Strategy. We asked young people what we needed to do to help curb youth out-migration. This year, we will show them we have listened by implementing an innovative strategy to position Newfoundland and Labrador as a province of choice for young people who want to work and prosper, raise a family, lead a community and leave a legacy they can be proud of.

This spring, we will also be launching the **International Registry** and its associated website. This registry will provide a direct means for workers from across Canada and the world to connect to employment prospects in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Growing Our Economy for Self-reliance top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: The future we are working to build is not limited by the constraints of the past. An increasingly diversified and mature economy is taking shape in all regions of our province. Activity is not confined to a single area or industry but spans traditional resource-driven industries and knowledge-based industry sectors. Much of this activity is driven by small business in such sectors as ocean technology, agriculture, life sciences, tourism, and information and communications technologies. My Government is working aggressively to build strong communities with healthy economies for today and future generations through **innovation and diversification**. By providing local enterprises with the tools they need to target new opportunities and modernize their operations, My Government is nurturing a climate for new growth and opening new doors to prosperity.

The massive infrastructure investments we are making this year will not only help tide many over these tough economic times, but also firm up the foundation for brighter days ahead. As My Government invests strategically in municipal infrastructure, it is encouraged by the growing

awareness that communities are stronger and more sustainable when they work as regions by sharing services and, when they so choose, by amalgamating. My Government encourages communities to get creative as they work together to build sustainable regional economies, and it will work with them to achieve those goals. Through a bold new **Regional Collaboration** Pilot Project, My Government will work with regional leaders to explore collaborative forms of governance that advance regional sustainability. My Government will continue to work collaboratively with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and local municipalities, regional economic development boards and other rural development agencies to develop long-term integrated sustainability plans which will help build a stronger province.

Celebrating a New Dawn in Labrador top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: In 2007, My Government unveiled an unprecedented strategic plan for the region of our province with the greatest untapped potential. The **Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador** is a groundbreaking, far-reaching strategy to bring Labrador's enormous potential to fruition and benefit the people of the Big Land as never before. The plan is now entering the third year of a five-year cycle, and a mid-term report will soon be issued. My Government is continuing to invest strategically in Labrador and remains committed to improving social and economic conditions in the region in collaboration with all Labradorians, including the Nunatsiavut Government representing Labrador's Inuit people.

In September, My First Minister and the Grand Chief of the Innu Nation, Mark Nui, announced the signing of a milestone agreement, the **Tshash Petapen Agreement** which translates as the New Dawn Agreement. Negotiations will continue to execute formal agreements. Once an Agreement-in-Principle on the Innu land claim has been reached, the Innu Nation will present the details to the Innu people for ratification. Truly historic in its scope, the New Dawn Agreement marks a new beginning for the Innu of Labrador and their relationship with the province.

As the only Atlantic province with a northern region, Newfoundland and Labrador is ideally positioned to be Canada's **Northern Gateway**, and we are working to earn this designation. As Captain Bob Bartlett ably demonstrated, this is an ideal staging ground for scientific expeditions to the North as well as environmental stewardship projects, commercial operations, marine traffic monitoring and national defence.

Standing Tall in Ocean Technology top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: The United States-based Marine Technology Reporter recently described Newfoundland and Labrador as "standing tall as an international epicenter of marine technology". My Government is determined to capitalize on opportunities to grow this sector by releasing a new **ocean technology** strategy in collaboration with the province's industry leaders. By strengthening ties between institutions and industry, enhancing supports for businesses, expanding global markets and nurturing an environment ripe for success, My Government will build on our historic strengths and natural inclination to be world leaders in the lucrative ocean technology sector.

Newfoundland and Labrador has been a leader in ocean industries for hundreds of years. We have long been the guardians of the greatest fishing resource in the world, threatened though it remains. Still, our province's **fishing industry** generates 24,000 jobs and hundreds of millions in returns year after year. Through strong investments in our growing aquaculture industry, we are harnessing modern technology to breathe new life into communities with historic ties to the fishing industry. Newfoundland and Labrador is exceptionally proud of the growth we have seen in our aquaculture industry in recent years, and we are determined to nurture that strength through continuing investments.

Taking a Lead Role in Research and Development top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: As the world's most successful economies invest millions to become leaders in **research and development** initiatives that will define opportunity and determine prosperity in the decades ahead, Newfoundland and Labrador would be irresponsible to remain behind. If we are not prepared to lead, others will step into the breach and reap the

rewards. This province will not sell out its children by selling short their future. My Government this year will launch the Research and Development Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador as a Crown corporation whose purpose will be to strengthen the focus, quantity, quality and relevance of research and development for the economic benefit of our province. We will continue to build on our success to date and will move aggressively to capitalize on opportunities in ocean technology, energy and biotechnology. The R&D Corporation will bring together stakeholders to finalize an R&D Strategy that will position Newfoundland and Labrador's research institutions and innovative entrepreneurs at the fore in key sciences and technological disciplines, both nationally and internationally, and this will enable Newfoundland and Labrador to lead in this lucrative sector in the decades to come.

Becoming the Energy Warehouse of the North American Northeast top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: The field of endeavour whose successes are surpassed by no others in this province is the energy sector. Already, we produce nearly half of Canada's conventional light sweet crude. In January, we celebrated production of our one billionth barrel of **oil**. The commitment to offshore development and exploration remains strong. The Hebron project is in the pre-Front-End Engineering and Design Phase with a project management office to open here in the next few months. My Government is committed to ensuring development moves forward with a focus on safety and the environment.

All should benefit from such emerging opportunities, not just some. The new Hebron Development Agreement is a true milestone for Newfoundland and Labrador with an unprecedented agreement for a **Gender Equity and Diversity** Plan for all phases of the project. With quantifiable objectives and goals, this plan will include training and recruitment programs that address access to employment and business opportunities for women, Aboriginal people and disadvantaged groups, including those with disabilities. Responsibility for the implementation of this commitment will be shared by the project operators and major contractors. The new Energy Plan also demonstrates My Government's commitment to ensuring women and underrepresented groups more fully participate in the energy sector and have full access to employment opportunities. Vale Inco is also currently finalizing a women's employment plan that will ensure equitable opportunities for women under the Long Harbour project. My Government will work collaboratively with business, labour and all stakeholders to advance opportunities for all who want to work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is a very important year for the **Lower Churchill** project, which is now undergoing environmental assessment, as is the proposal to establish a Labrador-Island Transmission Link. The projects would generate more than 17,000 person-years of employment over a 10-year construction period and bring incredible opportunities for generations to follow.

We have also begun to reap the potential to generate clean energy from the **wind**, with nine turbines operating at St. Lawrence and nine installed at Fermeuse. Cumulatively, these sustainable energy units will be able to displace over 300,000 barrels of oil at Holyrood and 150,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions while powering 14,000 homes resulting in significant cost savings over the next two decades. Our new energy powerhouse Nalcor Energy this year will also start to operate the wind-hydrogen-diesel demonstration project at Ramea, showing Canadians how to bring alternative energy to an isolated community. These are tremendous success stories that My Government will showcase when it hosts the national conference of energy and mines ministers later this year.

Renewed interest in renewable energy reflects the goals of My Government's comprehensive Energy Plan and **Climate Change** Action Plan, which together will help us reduce emissions and enhance sustainability. In line with this Action Plan, My Government in January assisted in launching the Coastal Connections Climate Change Pilot Project, through which students from Clarenville High and Random Island Academy are gathering data to measure the impacts of climate change on the fishery and their own communities.

Promoting Our Uncommon Potential top

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Just before we next gather for a Speech from the Throne, Canada will host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver, and Newfoundland and Labrador will be there, promoting ourselves to the world. This fall, some 330 torchbearers will carry the flame across this province and celebrate the power and sheer pleasure of

sport. Having opened the new state-of-the-art Newfoundland and Labrador PowerPlex during the past year, My Government will continue this year to support our athletes and promote to all of us the many enduring benefits of sport and recreation.

My Government, in partnership with industry, has just unveiled our collaborative **tourism** vision for Newfoundland and Labrador entitled "Uncommon Potential" and set a target of doubling tourism revenue by 2020. Our tourism product is getting better by the year. With award-winning marketing strategies including a billboard on the Gardiner Expressway promoting Newfoundland and Labrador through a curtained window and television ads to rival the best, My Government is confident we have what it takes to draw the tourists in. This year, we invite the world to join us at Brigus and other communities to honour the legacy of Captain Bob Bartlett. His achievements amaze us and his attitude inspires us to fix our sights boldly and courageously on the high latitudes of self-reliance to which we aspire. No matter how audacious the goal or how great the obstacles, we have all we need to accomplish what we set out to achieve. Like Captain Bob, and in the words of America's new President, with hope and virtue, let us endure what storms may come.

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Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Estimates of expenditure will be laid before you in due course and you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence this new Session.

Divine Providence guide you in your deliberation.

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